

Extension of Sittings

Mr. Barrett: Mr. Speaker, I find some of the interjections most interesting. I really do.

An Hon. Member: That is good, because your speech sure is not.

Mr. Barrett: It is the kind of arrogance that is being displayed by Hon. Members opposite that leads to cynicism about politics in this country; and it is that kind of arrogance that will lead to the disillusionment on the part of the majority in this country in respect of what it is we in this Chamber attempt to do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Barrett: Mr. Speaker, I have been told that I should not make reference to attendance, and I will not; however, I find it interesting that there is not one voice on the Government side that is prepared to say: "Okay, we will go back to being the principled Tories we were under Diefenbaker. Okay, we will take a little more time; okay, we will hear this debate out, permitting every Member to speak, and then we will have our way."

I feel, Mr. Speaker, that there is a secret agenda, one that Hon. Members opposite are not sharing with this House. That can be the only explanation for the motion we have before us.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is the House ready for the question?

The Hon. Member for Sault-Ste-Marie, on debate.

Mr. Steve Butland (Sault-Ste-Marie): Mr. Speaker, I am saddened to rise for the first time in this House to speak to an issue of little substance, to speak to a point of principle—a principle of considerable import to me, to my constituents, and to the people of Canada. While I appreciate that what I have to say will fall on deaf ears, I am obligated to speak against the kind of undemocratic heavy-handed style of this majority Government.

Before being elected to the House of Commons—something which makes me feel very proud and honoured—I was an educator, the principal of an elementary school, of some 26 years, in which capacity I had the occasion to referee many school yard disagreements. What we are faced with in this session reminds me of just such disagreements. Often, the disagreements were playground quarrels resulting from the arbitrary decision by some bully to change the rules of the game.

If I may continue the analogy, as the referee and witnesses to the event inevitably would rule against the bully, the Government in this case, being the bully, will, in the end, receive its just retribution. It will take time, but inevitably it will happen.

When one modifies the rules—or worse yet discards the rules—the effect on the rules is great; but even more dramatic is the effect on the process itself. Let us not forget the effect upon the participants.

It is no wonder that people are cynical of Government.

The bottom line for New Democrats—and, we believe, for Canadians—is that we object to the contravention of the long-standing revered traditions of Parliament, and we wish our objections to be stated and recorded. We question the abandonment of the rules. Why were they abandoned? There is no apparent reason, other than to satisfy a self-inflicted but non-binding deadline.

January 1, 1989, is not significant to the Americans, apparently; yet, the Minister for International Trade (Mr. Crosbie) states that he is concerned that the Americans may request exemptions from the Free Trade Agreement if we ask for any change in the deadline. That statement only leads credence to the perception that we will soon be into a master-slave situation as a result of the Free Trade Agreement.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, let me reiterate what a major personal disappointment it is to be obligated to speak to a matter that should not be in question, rules that are enshrined to serve a particular and pragmatic purpose.

It has been a sorry beginning to this the Thirty-fourth Parliament, and we are fearful that things will continue in this fashion, unless this Government changes its pompous, inflexible attitude. The election victory was not meant to condone or endorse smugness. We are only requesting the opportunity to speak to a deal that we believe to be the death-knell of Canada as we know it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Ricard (Laval): Mr. Speaker, this is my first opportunity since November 21, to rise in this House to thank all my constituents who sent me back to Ottawa to represent them for another term, and also to congratulate all new Members who came here for the first time and witness the charade that is going on today.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder how fascinated they must be by the debates going on and especially by the kind of demagoguery that has been rampant for some four days. I remember in 1984, when I was first elected and sat in this House and heard people talk, I was telling myself: "It must be fun to make one's maiden speech, to have something to say, not to utter nonsense."